

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 1874

THE UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION REPORT*
II.

IT has of course been always well known that the endowments of Oxford and Cambridge have been by law restricted, till within the last few years, to members of the Established Church; but to the outside world it will probably be a surprise to learn from this Report how far-reaching have been the consequences of this restriction, and how deep is the ecclesiastical character which has been thus imprinted upon a large portion of the academical wealth which the nation imagines to be at its own free disposal. It must be premised that in this respect, as in so many others, Oxford furnishes far more matter for comment than Cambridge, so that the following illustrations will be mainly taken from the former University; and also that it is regularly in the most wealthy Colleges that ecclesiastical objects receive a disproportionate amount of pecuniary aid: two circumstances which point to the conclusion that it is superfluity of income which causes the interests of education and learning to be cast into comparative neglect.

The synoptical tables at the end of this volume state that the Oxford Colleges have in their gift or annexed to their Headships 436 benefices of the returned annual value of 187,000*l*. It is notorious that these returns are considerably below the gross amount actually received, but as they stand they represent a sum equal to more than two-thirds of the total amount which these same Colleges receive from their corporate endowments. The proportion at Cambridge is not quite so large. Some of the Colleges have exercised their statutory powers of selling their advowsons, but to no great extent, and it is yet a moot legal point whether the money produced from such sales can be diverted to purely secular objects. It is noticed, however, by the Commissioners, that in one or two cases such money has been carried to the ordinary account, and that in others it has been appropriated to purposes which otherwise must have been paid for out of the corporate revenue. The proper disposition of the wealth represented by these advowsons is clearly one of those questions which should not be left to the varying and self-interested action of the individual Colleges, but must be resolutely faced by Parliament, and if it be decided in the way which the progress of modern opinion seems most disposed to favour, there will result a very large increase on the total of 260,000*l*. a year mentioned last week as the clear sum available in the reconsideration of the endowments of Oxford. According to another heading in the synoptical tables the total sum of 8,600*l*. is expended upon the College chapels at Oxford, a total which will probably not be considered too large, when it is also stated that out of it are maintained the great choral services at Magdalen, New, and Christ Church, at an average of more than 2,000*l*. each. This sum, however, deserves quotation, if only out of contrast with the item which follows under the head of "Library," which amounts at Oxford to the bare pittance of 1,300*l*. Here also the amounts expended at Cambridge upon the ecclesiastical and secular establishments

stand in a similar proportion. It is true that the libraries are awarded something besides from Trust funds and from fees on graduation, but the circumstance that their wants are so conspicuously put into the second place is most significant of the general tone of feeling prevalent at the Universities on these matters.

Another item in these tables is headed "Subscriptions and Pensions," amounting at Oxford to close upon 9,000*l*., which may not perhaps seem an extravagant expenditure for the owners in fee of so much landed property; yet it will be viewed with much suspicion by those who know how feeble College meetings are in their resistance to the importunities of past members of their body seeking pecuniary help for all those objects which the Church of England takes upon itself to perform in rural parishes. The part of this subject, however, which is destined to attract the largest amount of public attention is that which has reference to the augmentation of College benefices out of corporate income, a process by which, as was before tolerably well known, the clerical fellows, forming as they do a majority in the governing bodies, provide comfortable pensions for their own declining years, and at the same time evince their interest in the general welfare of the Church. The extent, however, to which this process has been carried on is now revealed for the first time, though it is not quite apparent whether all has yet been disclosed, for in the course of their inquiries on this topic the Commissioners have not unnaturally been met with considerable reluctance, and in some cases apparently even with evasion. The synoptical tables for the Oxford Colleges give the amount thus annually devoted as just 9,000*l*., which may be thought a fully sufficient charge for this item, being more than is set apart for College officers, for the management of estates, or for investment. This figure, however, it cannot be too widely known, is a totally delusive one, and probably does not represent one quarter of the amount which is really squandered in this way. This conclusion would be at once suspected by anyone who has an inkling of the facts, when he reads that Queen's is credited in this table with nothing at all, and Magdalen with only 17*l*. 10*s*. A more particular examination of the full returns made by the individual Colleges amply confirms these suspicions by proving, though in a roundabout way, that Queen's really pays away to incumbents 3,000*l*. a year, and Magdalen no less than 9,000*l*. To this it may be added that Christ Church, which in the tables is only credited with 2,000*l*., does as a matter of fact spend just four times that amount; and that since 1835, and chiefly within the last few years, has given away 28,000*l*. for cognate ecclesiastical purposes. In connection with this subject, it may be mentioned that Magdalen possesses a certain benefaction called the Sheppard Fund, subject to no specific conditions, except that the proceeds are to be appropriated "to such uses as are likely to promote piety and learning in Magdalen or any other College." Out of a net 2,000*l*. a year received from this fund, 300*l*. is spent on management, &c., the ambiguous item of subscriptions runs away with 470*l*., while 720*l*. is swallowed up in ecclesiastical objects, leaving a bare 540*l*. for Magdalen College and other schools. The accounts of the Hulme Trust connected with Brasenose teach the same lesson, for in that case no less than 4,000*l*. per annum out of a

* Continued from p. 476.

net revenue of 6,000*l.*, under the authority, it is true, of recent Acts of Parliament, is devoted to livings and churches; a considerable deviation, as the Commissioners observe, from the intention expressed in the will of the benefactor. The returns of the value of the Professorships are equally significant, for the five Divinity Chairs are each endowed with 1,500*l.* and a house, whereas the average of the remaining Professorships cannot be more than 500*l.* without a residence. It may here be incidentally mentioned that the collective income of the Oxford Professors from all sources amounts to 25,000*l.*, of which only 450*l.* comes from fees, and more than half of this latter sum from the fees of the four Science Professors.

Concerning the number of Fellowships confined to those who have taken or who have promised to take orders, this Report is entirely silent, on the same principle apparently as it omits to state what proportion of the College endowments is appropriated to the encouragement of Physical Science. For information on this latter topic, recourse may be had to the Report of another Royal Commission lately published, and the University Calendars yield some evidence on the former point. As to Oxford, it has been calculated that with the exception of Merton, where for the future all Fellowships, as well as the Headship, will be entirely open, nearly half the Fellowships are what is commonly called clerical, and all the remaining Headships are confined to clergymen. The proportion in the different Colleges is very irregular, but the reader will hardly be surprised to learn that, in accordance with what has been intimated above, at the four wealthiest Colleges the proportion is as high as two clerical fellows to one lay.

All these facts, and there are more of the same character, seem to point one way: that when the reconstruction of the Universities becomes a matter of public and not special interest, and when the uses to which their endowments are put shall be fundamentally reconsidered in the light of modern experience, one of the first questions which the nation will have to decide for itself will be whether so large a portion of academical property shall in the future be limited to purposes which certainly are not educational, and nowhere else than in England would ever be thought to be academical. That the Colleges themselves cannot be permitted to settle these great questions at their own sweet will is abundantly made clear by the facts recorded in this Report. It may be granted that the reformed statutes of a few of the Oxford Colleges, which are appended at the end of this volume, promise to abolish certain of the more prominent evils in their constitution, which evils indeed nowhere find any active defenders; but in none of these schemes is adequate importance attached to the duty of encouraging original research, the one part of its academical functions which Oxford neither performs nor regrets to have left unperformed. Moreover, the well-intentioned activity of some three or four of the less wealthy Colleges affords no guarantee that the greater institutions will not continue in their wasteful courses, and permit fresh vested interests to be acquired daily. Perhaps public opinion is not yet fully ripe, and perhaps those who have interested themselves in these subjects are not yet sufficiently unanimous; but for the future, at any

rate, no excuses of this kind ought to be tolerated. The Commission on Scientific Instruction and the Advancement of Science has thrown into shape a scheme of reform which, though primarily adapted to the case of original research in the physical sciences, is capable of being extended to similar branches of genuine study, and to the outline of that scheme many prominent men, statesmen and others, have given in their adhesion. This Commission has now in its Report given us all the materials requisite for discovering where the necessary funds shall come from; and from henceforth it will be only due to laziness, or to individual perversity, if a definite scheme of University Re-organisation, conceived in the interests of unencumbered investigation and mature study, is not soon presented for the acceptance of the public.

SEDLEY TAYLOR'S "SOUND"

Sound and Music: a Non-mathematical Treatise. By Sedley Taylor, M.A. (London: Macmillan and Co.)

FINDING from the title-page and preface that this work, though non-mathematical, undertakes to give an account of the acoustical discoveries of Helmholtz, we acknowledge having felt some misgivings when we commenced the perusal of it. We will presently inform our readers whether we found our fears justified or not by the book itself; but we must first state why we felt them.

The recent reasonable and even necessary outcry for popular scientific education in this country has led to the publication of a perfect shoal of elementary treatises. Everyone who has a smattering of knowledge or who has access to a consulting library considers himself thereby fitted to write a treatise. For one such that is written by a man thoroughly competent as far as knowledge and experience can qualify him, we have half a dozen written by popular lecturers, or rather showmen, in whose eyes sensational experiments sensorially described form the really attractive portion of science! Besides these, we have a dozen others—some the work of those fluent writers who can master a new subject in a week, complete an octavo treatise on it by the end of the month, see it through the press, and proceed immediately to repeat the process on something newer still; the others, the original work of uninstructed but aspiring men, who have learnt too little to be aware either of what science is or of their own utter ignorance of it. This is no fancy sketch, but, as all competent to judge will allow, an exceedingly unpleasant reality. In some subjects, no doubt, competent men have the field (as yet) left almost to themselves. It is only now and then that an ignoramus ventures to produce a treatise on Hyperdeterminants, Vortex Motion, or Specific Inductive Capacity. Yet, if books on such subjects could command a host of eager and ignorant purchasers, there would soon be a supply from quarters hitherto undreamt of. But anyone and everyone can write on such simple matters as heat, light, electricity, or (more to our present purpose) sound and music. "Bother Helmholtz, and Clerk-Maxwell, and Thomson," cries a public atheist for sensation, and whose palate is already dead to all but the most potent spices; "we want excitement, knowledge too if it comes painlessly, but excitement;" which (viz. the sensation and the excitement) are precisely what that same public will